



Customer Profile

Industry: **Technology/Services**

Company: **ProModel Corporation**

Profile subject: **Dan Hickman, CTO**

Application: **ARFORGEN Synchronization Tool (AST)**

Quote: **"IdeaBlade's support helped us meet critical deadlines for the US Army."**



In the past decade, the nature of the conflicts facing US armed forces has changed. To deal with cold war type threats, the Army followed a model of tiered readiness where soldiers were deployed in sequential waves consisting of major response forces, rapid response forces, reinforcements and reserves. With the end of the cold war, this linear model was ill-suited to deal with modern day terror threats, regional conflicts and the need to simultaneously operate in multiple theaters. To help redefine its force deployment model, the Army turned to a company well versed in process optimization and decision support: ProModel Corporation.

Taking on the challenge of remaking how the US Army deploys its forces is a mission critical endeavor. ProModel tasked its CTO, Dan Hickman, to develop the predictive decision support tool used in Army Force Generation (ARFORGEN) – a progressive readiness model for synchronizing multiple time-sensitive activities to deploy the right number and type of units, in the right place, at the right time.

ProModel successfully responded to this challenge by creating a Microsoft Silverlight-based ARFORGEN Synchronization Tool (AST). With this tool the Army is now positioned to make decisions about forces and deployment in hours, as opposed to the days and weeks it used to take. And by making these informed choices quickly, soldier's lives are being positively impacted.

On building the AST system for the Army: "The entire ProModel team is both proud and humbled to have a part in helping the Army build AST. We understand how important it is to rapidly make the right decisions, the first time when it comes to deploying US forces because when those decisions are made, lives are on the line. There is NO room for trial and error."

On choosing to use Silverlight in the AST application: “The Army likes to visualize their data in Gantt chart style with a lot of interaction with time items, zooming in and out and moving them. So in its first iteration, the AST, started as a thick client WinForms application since this is where our expertise lies. With the need to support over 30 people involved in the decision making process, it had to quickly evolve into a web-based application using ASP and AJAX. Unfortunately, the resulting application lost much of its fidelity from the original WinForms application and the Army felt it would result in a productivity loss to the process. The whole situation was further complicated by the fact that while we were developing AST, the Army was continuing to refine its force deployment process. It was about this time that Silverlight was released. With Silverlight, we could easily build a web-based application in a timely fashion that matched the fidelity of our original WinForms application, while at the same time keep up with the changes the Army was making to their process.”

Dan and his team reaped large productivity benefits by going to Silverlight. His ASP/AJAX application which took nearly four man-months to build was easily replicated and surpassed in capabilities with a Silverlight version in just a matter of weeks. In addition, Dan and his team are contracted to deliver two releases a year to the AST. Silverlight is enabling ProModel to focus on customer-centric features instead of fighting with technology not designed for the desired richness the Army demands.

On working with IdeaBlade and using DevForce Silverlight: “Our original Silverlight proof of concept with the Army focused on the presentation part of the application but did not include moving data into and out of the database. Now that the Army had given us the go-ahead, we had to build the plumbing to support the application. While we have the technical expertise to do this, the limited time we had to deliver the application not to mention the pain of writing the plumbing was not something I was ready to face. Since we had worked with DevForce in the past on other projects, we called them to see if they had something to support Silverlight. They provided us with a beta of DevForce Silverlight that allowed us to connect our presentation layer to the database in just a couple of days. It allowed me to redirect two guys I had dedicated to working on the plumbing to instead work on features the Army was interested in. I didn’t want to focus on the database tier – I just wanted to make the Army happy. If DevForce Silverlight didn’t exist, I wouldn’t have used Silverlight in this application. I had the data tools necessary and was able to finish the AST project on time.”

In the same way application developers today don’t write their own data grids, DevForce Data Services allow you to abstract yourself from the database work. With DevForce, developers don’t need to spend a lot of time in the database tier, freeing development time to focus on more customer-facing features.

“If DevForce Silverlight didn’t exist, I wouldn’t have used Silverlight in this application.”

On how DevForce Silverlight will affect other ProModel applications: “With the Army application, we started with a clean slate. This allowed us to use best of breed tools such as Silverlight and DevForce to complete the application. I had no legacy code to deal with and was not going to repeat the mistakes of the past. The nice thing about DevForce is that it fits very well into our tiered development philosophy. I’m now looking at our other applications that utilize CSLA to see how I can upgrade them with DevForce and Silverlight. I wouldn’t even consider doing that if it weren’t for DevForce. This ensures we stay within our budget, accelerates delivery of customer requested features and redeploys CSLA dedicated resources to areas of customer need.”

IdeaBlade’s Support Gives You the Confidence Necessary to Tackle the Toughest Projects

IdeaBlade supported Dan and his team so he could deliver this critical application on time. By adhering to Microsoft standards and at the same time extending the capabilities of the platform, IdeaBlade provides Dan with the support necessary to extend AST even as the Microsoft platform evolves. “IdeaBlade’s support helped us meet critical deadlines for the US Army. We’re grateful for the support we’ve received from IdeaBlade.”

An early pioneer in .NET application development, IdeaBlade today provides the industry’s most mature and extensible platform for the development and deployment of enterprise .NET applications. IdeaBlade’s DevForce ® framework enables enterprise developers to build, deploy, and maintain n-tier .NET applications with dramatically less pain and risk than they could achieve by any other means.

A Microsoft Gold Certified Partner and member of the Microsoft Visual Studio Industry Partner (VSIP) program, IdeaBlade has numerous patents pending for its DevForce technology. The company has delivered .NET framework solutions to hundreds of independent software vendors (ISVs) and enterprises in a wide range of industries, including healthcare, insurance, finance, education, agriculture, biotechnology, and business services.

IdeaBlade

6001 Shellmound Street, Suite 350

Emeryville, CA 94608-1091

phone: 510-596-5100

fax: 510-450-0379

www.ideablade.com

